

Tribal
1-4 Portland Square
BRISTOL
BS2 8RR

T 0300 123 1231

Text Phone: 0161 6188524
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct T 0117 311 5319

Direct F 0117 315 0430

email: matthew.parker@tribalgroup.com

14 September 2011

Ms S Sheldrake
Headteacher
Sherwin Knight Infant School
Cedar Road
Strood
Rochester
Kent
ME2 2JP

Dear Ms Sheldrake

Ofsted monitoring of Grade 3 schools: monitoring inspection of Sherwin Knight Infant School

Thank you for the help which you and your staff gave when I inspected your school on 13 September 2011, for the time you gave to our phone discussions and for the information which you provided before and during the inspection. Please also pass on my thanks to the Chair of the Governing Body, the representative of the local authority and the staff with whom I had meetings during my visit.

Since the previous inspection in June 2010, the school has been affected by the long-term absence of the deputy headteacher, who has responsibility for special educational needs and/or disabilities, and by inadequate teaching in one class and the consequent measures taken to address this. In May 2011 the school federated with the co-located junior school with the subsequent formation of a joint governing body.

As a result of the inspection on 9–10 June 2010, the school was asked to address the most important areas for improvement which are set out in the annex to this letter.

Having considered all the evidence, I am of the opinion that at this time the school has made inadequate progress in making improvements and satisfactory progress in demonstrating a better capacity for sustained improvement.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 1 has declined over three years, with a significant dip in 2011. Achievement was inadequate for some Year 2 pupils in 2011, as demonstrated by pupils' progress tracking data and by the end of key stage assessment results. Although monitoring and assessment procedures are in place, these are not systematic or robust enough to ensure that all pupils reach their

targets. As a result, some pupils fail to progress as they should and a significant gap in attainment remains between those pupils known to be eligible for free school meals and their peers. A clear focus, including staff training, on raising the attainment of the most-able pupils has, however, been successful. This has resulted in some accelerated progress made by more-able pupils. In addition, pupils in most classes have benefited from an increased range of opportunities for writing and editing their work. School assessment data indicate that these pupils are making satisfactory or good progress in their writing.

There is still more to do to increase the rigour of monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and of teachers' planning. Teachers' planning fails to reflect the abilities and prior learning of all children, resulting in tasks that are not always matched accurately enough to pupils' needs. Little differentiation is evident and plans rarely cover the roles of teachers or other adults. Neither specific support nor learning intentions for children with higher levels of special educational needs are identified and some teachers are not fully conversant with the learning needs of such pupils within their classes. In lessons, assessment for learning strategies are inconsistently utilised and the environment in Key Stage 1 is not used actively enough to promote learning. Some teachers talk for long periods of time, consequently reducing opportunities for pupils to discuss and reflect upon their learning. In other cases, however, pupils take part in peer- and self-evaluation. As a result of limited planning and an inaccurate view of pupils' knowledge, pupils are not consistently making sufficient progress, despite their good behaviour for learning.

Significant improvements have been made to both provision and outcomes in the Nursery and Reception classes, and end of Foundation Stage profile scores have increased over three years. The school has worked with the support of the local authority to improve the quality of the environment and resources. Both the indoor and outdoor classrooms now provide an enticing environment where children can extend their skills in all areas of learning. Effective opportunities are in place to promote writing both inside and out. Systems for planning are currently under review. Transition arrangements are detailed, and despite having been in school only a few days, all children in this key stage were settled and happily participating actively in child-initiated activities.

The headteacher is fully aware of the current standards of attainment throughout the school, inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and learning, planning, use of assessment and pupils' progress. The school improvement plan has recently been evaluated and the leadership team is adapting this to provide a sharper focus on teaching and learning since the range of necessary improvements are not yet established. Appropriate remedial action, including leadership development and staff training, has been planned and is underway.

Vital improvements to governance have been secured. The local authority has provided highly effective support and a new federated governing body has recently been established. Instruments of governance, including clearly defined committee

structures and responsibilities, are in place. Members of the governing body have relevant experience and are equipped with the skills to enable them to carry out this role. Bespoke training is being undertaken and plans are in place to promote the profile of members of the governing body throughout the school community. Despite these positive steps, and the consequent strengthening of school leadership and capacity for sustained improvement, governors are not adequately involved in the strategic development of the school. They do not currently provide the necessary levels of support or challenge to school leaders or possess a deep enough understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

The school's capacity to move forward is evident since, where actions have been planned, implemented and monitored, improvements have been secured. For example, the impact of actions taken to raise the quality of provision, outcomes and the environment in the Early Years Foundation Stage has been particularly positive. Moreover, the attainment of more-able pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 has increased and their progress is accelerating. The focus on writing has been successful for current pupils and, during this visit, pupils in Year 2 were observed to write with enthusiasm, at the appropriate levels for their age. Measures identified to raise the quality of teaching and learning further, and to secure consistent good practice, are fully consistent with the needs of the school.

I hope that you have found the inspection helpful in promoting improvement in your school. This letter will be posted on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Hilary Macdonald
Her Majesty's Inspector

Annex

The areas for improvement identified during the inspection which took place in June 2010

- Ensure that the governing body provides a satisfactory level of support and challenge to the school by:
 - increasing their visibility in school through more frequent informal visits
 - establishing strong working relationships with staff through involvement in school development groups
 - becoming more actively involved in school improvement planning and in the evaluation of the work of the school, so that they can ask more challenging questions about the provision and outcomes for pupils
 - ensuring that governors receive appropriate training, so that they are better equipped for their role.
- Improve the quality of teaching and learning so that it is consistently good by:
 - making sure that the school improvement plan is sharply focused on improving learning as a key priority
 - ensuring that activities are exciting and challenging for pupils, so that they are always involved, enthused, concentrate and behave as well as possible
 - making sure that whole-class 'carpet' time/work allows pupils to be more actively involved in the learning tasks
 - providing regular opportunities for pupils to edit and improve their writing, so that they are helped to move quickly from one level of skills to the next
 - encouraging teachers to share ideas and good practice with each other as much as possible
 - ensuring that children in the Early Years Foundation Stage have plenty of resources and opportunities to extend their learning, develop creativity and use writing as an integral part of their play and investigations.